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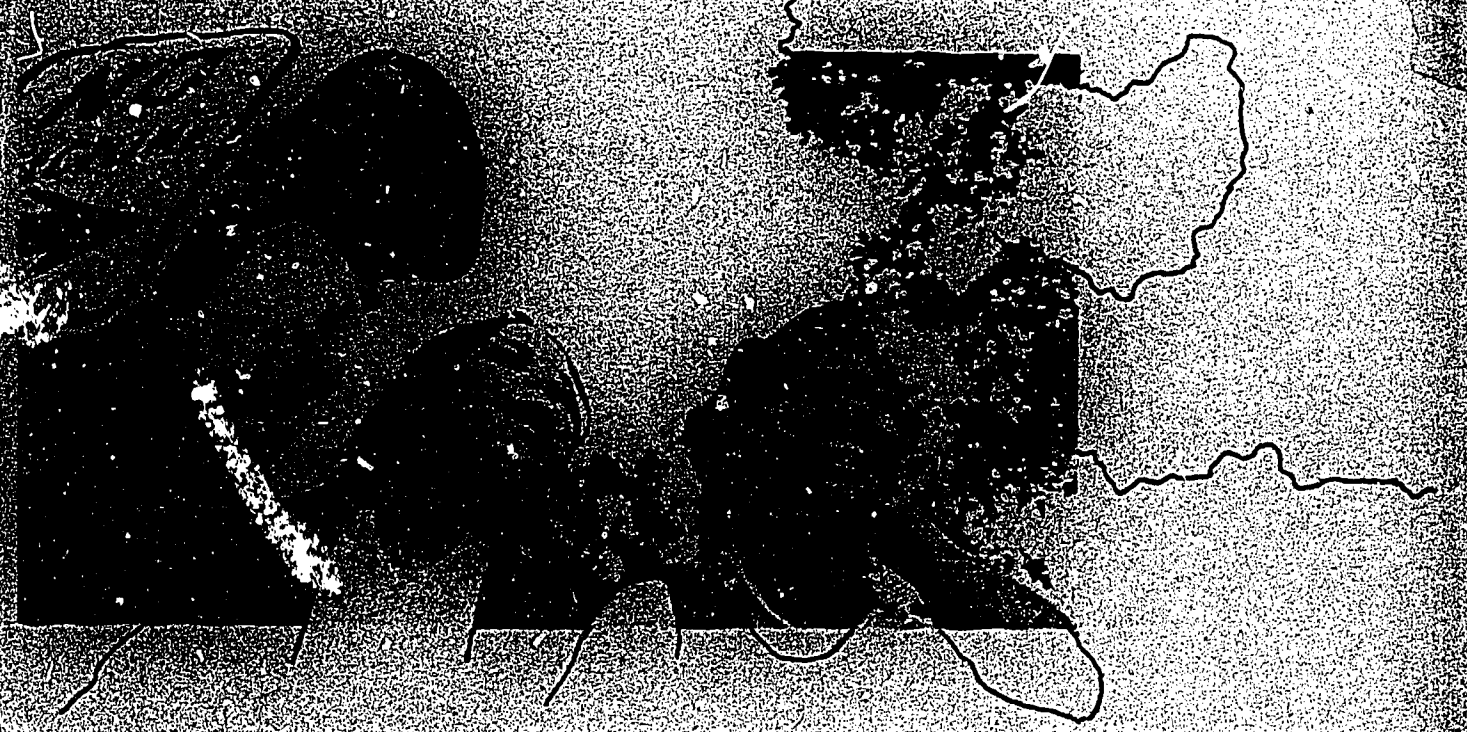
ABSTRACT

The Albuquerque City Center Schools (ACCS) project, begun in 1983, was designed to increase the effectiveness of 12 schools in the Albuquerque High School cluster by creating a climate of high expectations, improving academic achievement, encouraging a climate of positive discipline, promoting student, community and private sector participation, and developing individual school programs to accomplish the project's goals. This report evaluates the project's success after its second school year of operation. Data were collected from status reports by principals; needs assessments administered to students, staff, and parents; comprehensive tests of basic skills to evaluate achievement; school profiles to delineate differences in school characteristics; and interviews with administrators, principals, staff and student leaders. The project has impacted the ACCS in several areas. It has: (1) facilitated change by providing a structure and framework for school improvement activities; (2) increased the achievement orientation of schools; (3) strengthened school-community relationships; (4) positively affected discipline and school climate; (5) contributed to greater stress and symptoms of burn-out among school staffs; and (6) resulted in subtle shifts in perception and attitude and the institutionalization of new strategies, approaches, and procedures. Recommendations are included as guides for the project in the 1985-86 school year. (PS)



The Albuquerque City Center Schools

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Program Evaluation 1984-85

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May, 1985

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Administrative Summary

The Albuquerque City Center Schools (ACCS) project designed to increase the effectiveness of 12 schools in the Albuquerque school cluster, was in its second year of operation during the 1984-85 school year. The project goals developed in August of 1983 are to:

- Create a climate of high expectations for students and staff
- Promote the improvement of student academic achievement
- Encourage a climate of positive discipline
- Create means for student, community, and private sector participation in the Albuquerque City Center Schools
- Develop individual school program designs to accomplish the project's goals.

The evaluation design included a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Data was collected from five sources:

- Status Reports - completed by principals to document project activities and effects
- Needs assessments - administered to students, staff, and parents to determine perceptions of the schools
- Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills - to evaluate student achievement
- School Profiles - to delineate differences in characteristics of the schools
- Interviews - of principals, school improvement teams, student councils, area and central office administrators and others.

The project has impacted the ACCS in several areas. It has:

- Facilitated change by providing a structure and framework for school improvement activities
- Increased the achievement orientation of the schools which had both positive and negative consequences
- Strengthened school-community relationships
- Positively affected discipline and school climate
- Contributed to greater stress and symptoms of burn-out among school staffs
- Resulted in subtle shifts in perception and attitude and the institutionalization of new strategies, approaches, and procedures.

The following recommendations are made to guide the project in the 1985-86 school year:

1. The focus of the project should be narrowed by concentrating resources on schools in the lower income neighborhoods, focusing on a specific instructional area such as literacy, or both.
2. When the project focus is determined, all resources should be used to support that focus so that the project will have a greater impact. For example, if the project focused on literacy, the itinerant teachers, inservice for school staff, parental involvement, and materials purchased should all focus on literacy.

3. Successful approaches that should be continued or expanded to address the project focus include: itinerant teachers, home visits, and seminar study groups for professional development.
4. Ways to creatively utilize staff and funding from supplemental programs should be explored.
5. The issue of student test performance should be placed in proper perspective so that educators feel free to try strategies that will result in long-term academic benefits for students.
6. The evaluation design should reflect the narrowed project focus and should creatively address the issue of student achievement through the use of a variety of instruments.

Project History

The Albuquerque City Center Schools (ACCS) project was designed to increase effectiveness of 12 schools which are part of the Albuquerque High School cluster.[1] The project did not have a distinct starting date, but instead began in several places simultaneously. For several years prior to the beginning of the ACCS project many of the schools, now a part of the project, implemented a variety of programs and activities to increase school effectiveness. Also, during this time South Area personnel coordinated articulation efforts between schools. A community group, the Core Area Committee, was appointed by the Superintendent to study the "core area" schools. The grassroots activity was coordinated into a cluster-wide effort known as the ACCS project in January of 1983 when administrators held a planning conference and officially named the project. This was followed by a major conference with community leaders, parents, and public school personnel and the development of a proposal to be presented to the Board of Education and the Superintendent. During the spring of 1983, needs assessments were administered to parents, students and staff to determine individual school, as well as, cluster-wide needs. A coordinating council was formed to assist in the implementation of the project.

The first report on the ACCS project was the Status Report produced in the spring of the 1983-84 school year. The information in the first report was baseline data collected prior to the beginning of the project or collected when the project had been in operation only a few months. In this report, evaluation information is presented based on about a year and a half of project operation, from August, 1983 through February, 1985.

[1] These schools are: Albuquerque High School, Jefferson Middle School, Washington Middle School, Dolores Gonzales Elementary, East San Jose Elementary, Eugene Field Elementary, Longfellow Elementary, Lowell Elementary, Monte Vista Elementary, Montezuma Elementary, Old Town Elementary, and Zia Elementary.

Evaluation Design

Development of the Design

In the fall of 1984, four members of the ACCS Coordinating Council formed an evaluation committee, including an elementary school principal, a middle school teacher, a community representative, and the District Program Evaluator from Instructional Research, Testing, and Evaluation (IRTE) who is liaison to these schools. The goal of the committee was to produce a comprehensive evaluation design that did not require major expenditures of time by ACCS staff, parents, and students. The committee worked throughout the fall on this task, periodically meeting with the coordinating council and ACCS principals to incorporate their suggestions. The task of developing an evaluation design for the ACCS project was difficult because the information in many of the project documents, e.g., the Chapter 2 proposal, the seven school effectiveness characteristics, and the stated project goals, did not all coincide. The final evaluation design which attempted to integrate the various emphases, consisted of three strands which represent the major focuses of the project. These are: Instruction and Achievement, School Environment, and School-Community Relations.

Data Sources

The next task was to determine how the data would be collected. It was decided that the best way to evaluate the project was with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods rather than with a purely quantitative or purely qualitative approach. An evaluation procedure called triangulation or use of a variety of instruments to look at the same program, was selected for the ACCS project (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest, 1966). Five major sources of data were selected: Status Reports, Needs Assessments, Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS), School Profiles, and Interviews. Each of these will be briefly described.

- Status Reports- The evaluation committee developed a format to be used by principals for the purpose of documenting project activities and their effects. The format, called the status report, was completed by principals between January and March of 1985. It was later decided by the Area Superintendent that the status reports would also be used in conjunction with individual evaluations. Data from the status reports was analyzed by coding all project activities under each of the seven school effectiveness charcteristics.

- Needs Assessments- The needs assessments from Spring, 1983 were revised and administered to students in grades 4-12, to parents of students in all grades, and to all ACCS staff members in the twelve schools. There were many problems in analyzing the needs assessment data including: differences in the samples for the pre and post administration of the survey, shifting perceptions during the project, and difficulty in interpreting survey data. These will be discussed in greater detail as evaluation results are presented.

- Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills - CTBS scores were used to analyze gains made by students in ACCS where longitudinal data was available.

- School Profiles - Demographic data produced by IRTE in the School Profiles was used to elucidate some of the differences in these schools.

- Interviews - Group and individual interviews were conducted at all twelve school sites and at area and central offices. Because interviews are the major source of data for this report, the procedures are discussed more fully below.

Interview Procedures

The people selected for interviews were carefully chosen to represent as many points of view of the project and project schools as possible. At each of the 12 schools, interviews were conducted with the principal, the school improvement team and the student council. In addition, the Area Superintendent, Area Directors of Instruction and a few other administrators who are involved in coordinating various aspects of the project were interviewed. Finally, the ten original members of the Core Area Committee were interviewed. A total of 24 group interviews and 30 individual interviews were conducted in February and March for the evaluation. Individual interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, using a set of prepared questions. School improvement team and student council interviews were conducted in a group format which worked toward the discovery of concensus; while individual viewpoints were expressed, the aim was to discover the larger themes which characterized people's preceptions of a school setting. The findings reported from the interview data are of this sort. That is, teacher and student concerns are reported only when the particular idea was expressed by several individuals at more than one school site.

Rather than discuss each of the sources of data in isolation, information from the status reports, the school profiles, the needs assessments, the CTBS, and the interviews are integrated throughout the discussion. This gives a more balanced picture of the effectiveness of the project by providing necessary descriptive information and support for evaluation findings.

Differences Among Albuquerque City Center Schools

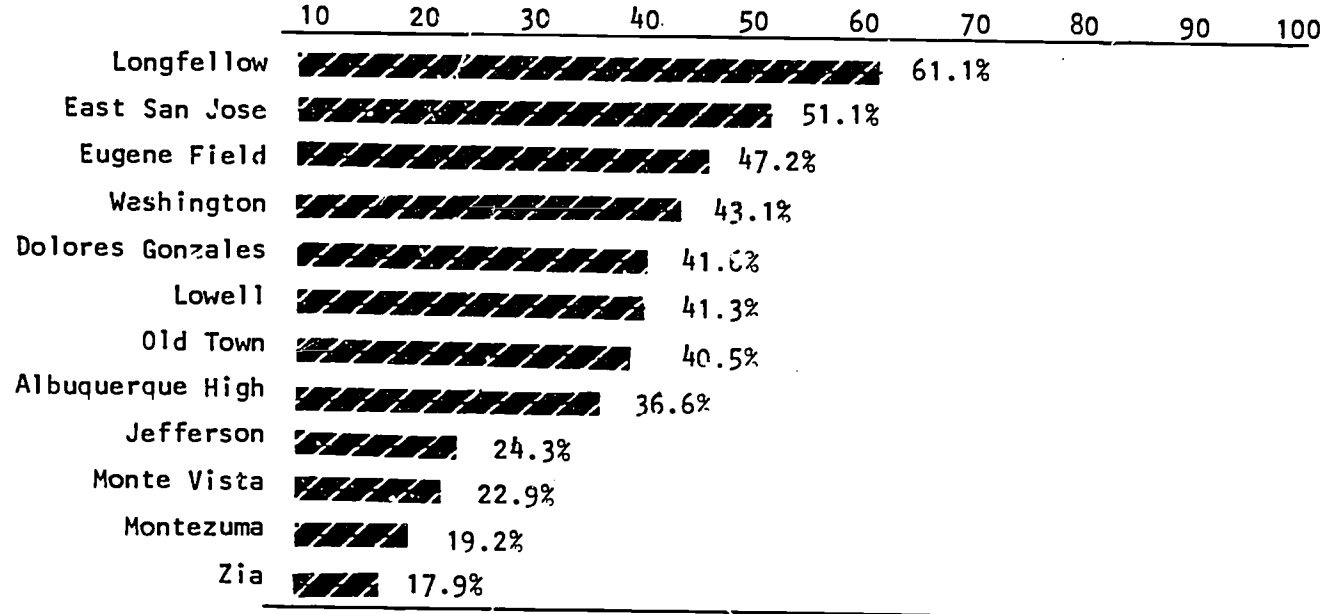
In the process of conducting the interviews and coding and analyzing the interview data, an interesting pattern began to emerge. Teachers and principals at some of the schools seemed to share one set of concerns, while teachers and principals at other schools seemed to share a different, common, set of concerns. Several administrators also noted that the schools face different kinds of problems requiring different approaches. Further analysis led to the working hypothesis that the schools in ACCS should not be looked at as describing a continuum, as test scores might suggest, but as belonging to one of two distinctly different types. School profile data supported the hypothesis that will be the the theme of this report: there are two types of schools in the ACCS cluster in the sense that the populations of the two types have distinctly different needs. The two types of schools, in turn, operate in dynamically different ways which are fundamentally incomparable. Therefore, they have approached school effectiveness in different ways and the ACCS project has been meaningful in each of these settings for different reasons.

To capture the differences of these schools, some information from the School Profiles (IRTE, 1985) will be presented. The information was compiled from 1980 census data and grouped according to APS school boundaries. Two things should be noted when interpreting the school profile information. First, since Longfellow became a magnet school in 1983, the school boundaries have changed. Therefore the income, average home cost, etc. does not match the current school population. Second, Albuquerque High School (AHS) has students from all of the neighborhoods that each elementary and middle school represents. Therefore, the community information for AHS represents somewhat of an average for these schools.

There are many differences in the communities and in characteristics of families of children attending the Albuquerque City Center (ACC) schools. For example, the average income per household ranged from a low of $12,802 in the East San Jose Elementary community to a high of $26,388 in the Monte Vista Elementary community. Perhaps more illuminating is a comparison of the percent of families who earn less than $10,000 a year. In only two of the ACC school communities is the percent of families earning less than $10,000 annually smaller than one-fifth of the total. In seven of the school communities between 40.5% and 61.1% of the families earn less than $10,000 a year. See Table 1.

TABLE 1

Percent of Families in ACCS Communities
Earning Less Than $10,000 Annually *

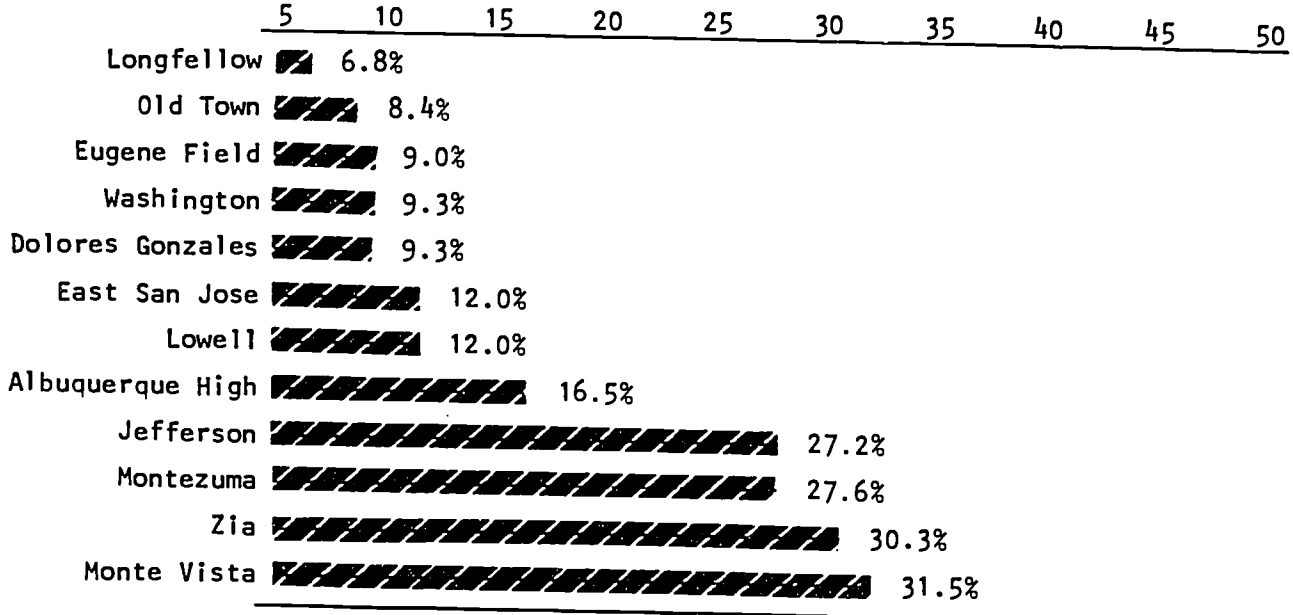


*Arranged in rank order from high to low.

In contrast, the percentage of families in the school boundary areas whose income is between $25,000 and $50,000 varies inversely, with the Longfellow (original school boundaries) and Old Town neighborhoods showing the smallest percentage and the Monte Vista and Zia neighborhoods showing the highest percentage. See Table 2.

TABLE 2

Percent of Families in ACCS Communities
Earning Between $25,000 and $50,000 Annually*



*Arranged in rank order from low to high.

As might be expected from the income data, the average home cost varies considerably in these neighborhoods. In the East San Jose school boundary area the average home cost is $27,081 while in the Montezuma area the average cost is $72,129, a difference of $45,048. See Table 3.

TABLE 3

Average Home Costs in ACCS Neighborhoods*

School	Average Cost
East San Jose	$ 27,081
Eugene Field	30,354
Lowell	36,008
Longfellow	37,861
Washington	39,654
Old Town	39,817
Dolores Gonzales	48,204
Albuquerque High	49,898
Monte Vista	56,254
Jefferson	59,921
Zia	62,440
Montezuma	72,129

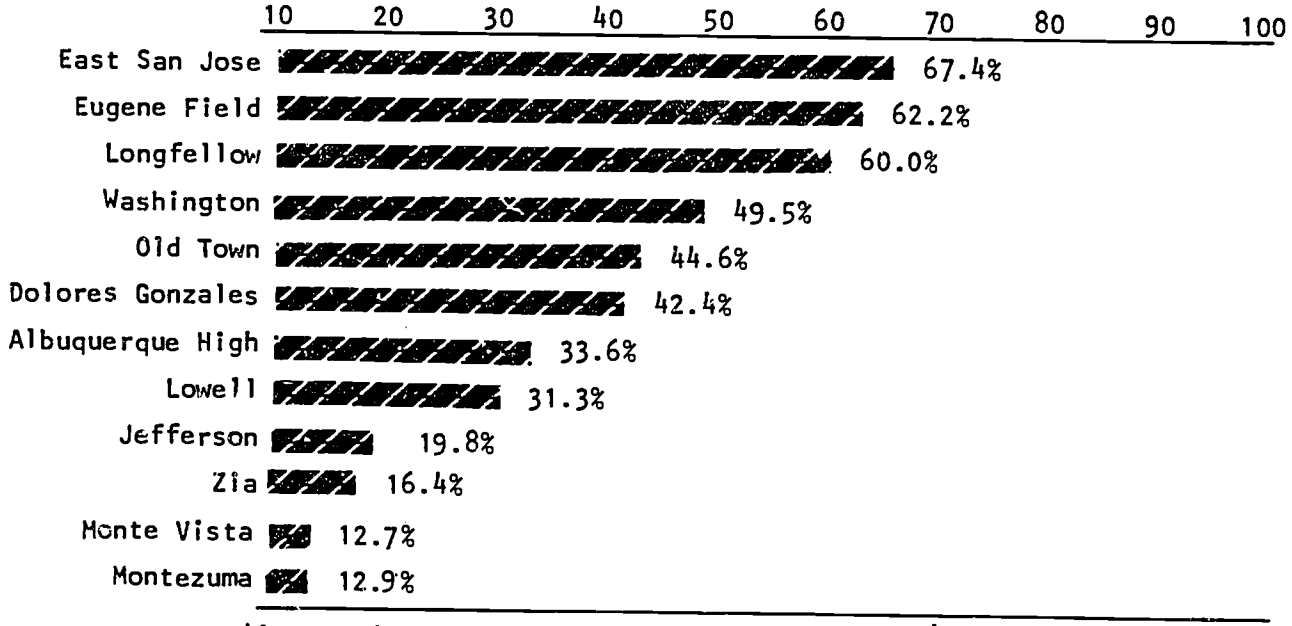
*Arranged in rank order from low to high.

Two measures of education level, the percent of adults in the household who didn't complete high school and the percent who are college graduates or beyond, also provide important comparative data. The percent of adults aged 25 and over in these households who didn't complete high school ranged from a high of 67.4% in the East San Jose community to a low of 12.7% in the Montezuma community. See Table 4.

The situation reverses, as might be expected, when the percent of college graduates and beyond is examined. The Monte Vista neighborhood had the highest percentage (41.9%) and East San Jose had the lowest (3.7%). See Table 5.

Table 4

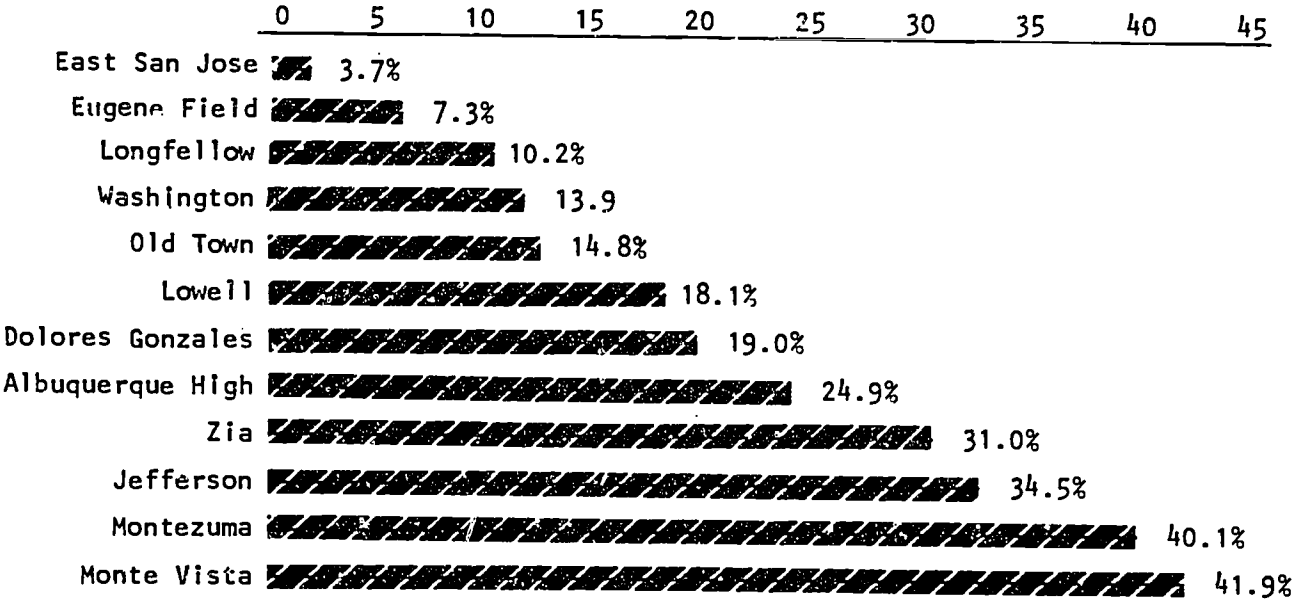
Percent of Adults Aged 25 and Over
in ACCS Households Who Didn't
Complete High School*



*Arranged in rank order from high to low.

Table 5

Percent of Adults Aged 25 and Over
in ACCS Households Who Completed
College or Post-College Studies*



*Arranged in rank order from low to high.

The percent of children and adults who speak a language other than English at home differs dramatically among the school neighborhoods in the ACCS cluster. For example in the East San Jose community, 86.2% of the adults, aged 18 and over, and 76.9% of the children, aged 5-17, speak a language other than English at home. In the Montezuma community, however, 20.4% of the adults and 18.6% of the children speak another language besides English at home. This is a much smaller percentage than at East San Jose, but nonetheless represents a fifth of the families in that area. This means that many of the ACC schools may have important needs in the area of literacy and development of English language skills. See Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6

Percent of Adults Aged 18 and Over
Who Speak A Language Other Than English at Home *

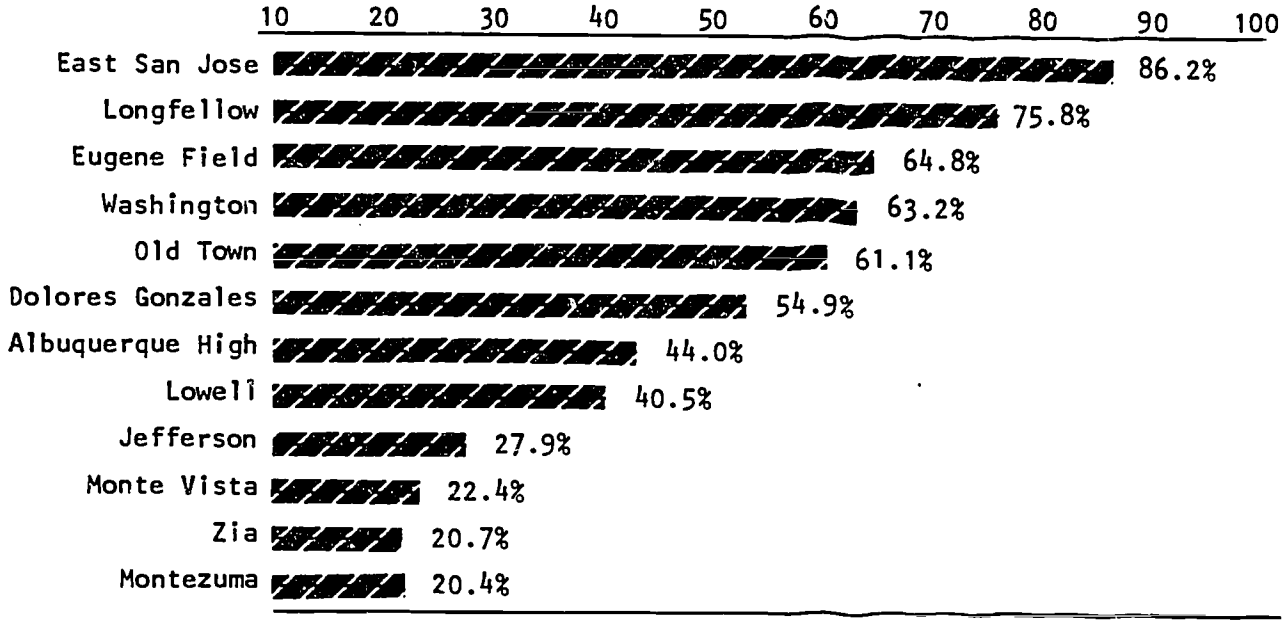
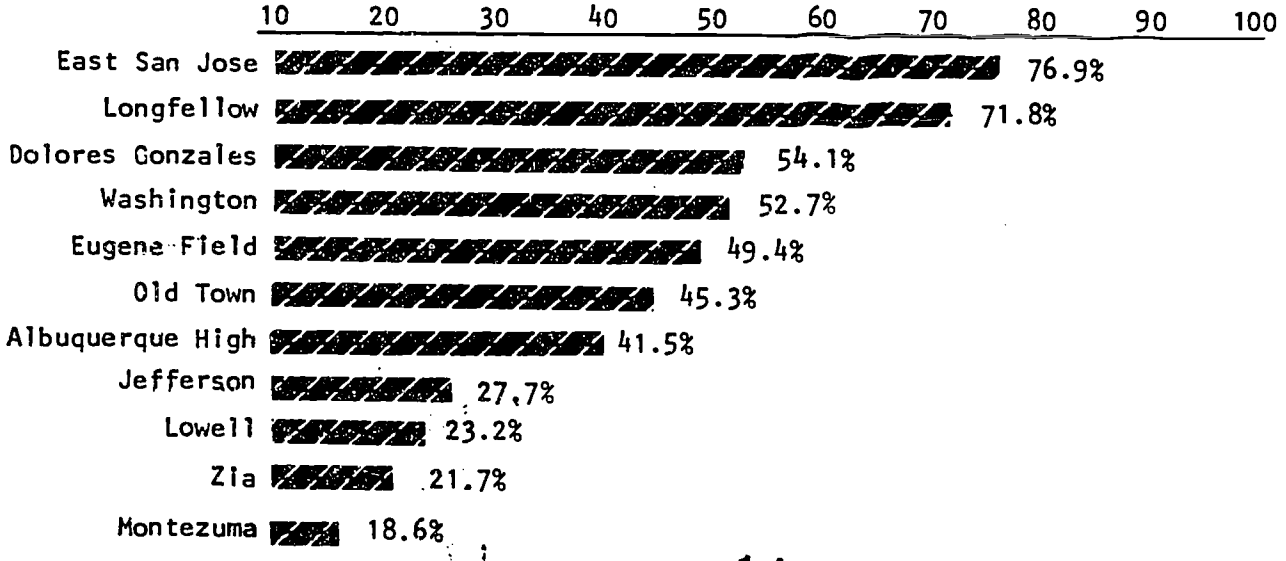


Table 7

Percent of Children Aged 5-7 in ACCS Households
Who Speak A Language Other Than English at Home *



Finally, districtwide, the percent of single parent households is 22.6%, but in the ACCS cluster all of the school neighborhoods have more than 27% single parents and several school boundary areas have as high as 42%. This points to a special set of concerns for these schools and a need to readjust many typical school practices. See Table 8.

Table 8

Percent of Single Parent Households in ACCS*

School	Percent
Longfellow	42.9
Eugene Field	42.4
Dolores Gonzales	41.7
Albuquerque High	37.2
Washington	35.8
Old Town	34.3
East San Jose	33.8
Jefferson	32.2
Monte Vista	31.7
Lowell	30.5
Montezuma	29.9
Zia	27.5

*Arranged in rank order from high to low.

It is apparent from the data presented that the ACC schools fall into two rather different groups: a less affluent group with a higher percentage of single parents, non-English speakers and a lower educational attainment; (referred to in this report as Group 1 schools) and a more affluent group with a higher level of educational attainment, and fewer single parents and non-English speakers (Group 2 schools). Although the schools sometimes change rankings when different school profile variables are examined, only in one case does a school shift from Group 1 to Group 2.

In each of the following sections of the report, Instruction and Achievement, School Environment, and Home-School Relations, the aim will be to explain how the school effectiveness characteristics have taken on different meanings in Group 1 and Group 2 schools, and how the ACCS project has had a different role and effect depending on the type of context in which it operated.

Instruction and Achievement

Overview of Instruction and Achievement

Although the school effectiveness characteristics could be grouped in a variety of ways and are, in fact, interrelated the four grouped under instruction and achievement deal with emphasis on achievement, high expectations, use of assessment instruments, and time-on-task. The definitions of the school effectiveness characteristics that follow are adopted from the Connecticut State Department of Education, (1981).

- Emphasis on Achievement/Clear School Mission: "There is a clearly articulated mission for the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability."
- Use of Assessment Instruments: "Feedback on student academic progress is frequently obtained. Multiple assessment methods such as teacher-made tests, samples of student work, mastery skills checklists, criterion-referenced tests, and norm-referenced tests are used."
- High Expectations: "The school displays a climate of expectation which the staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and they (the staff) have the capability to help students achieve such mastery."
- Time on Task: "Teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time on instruction in basic skill areas. For a high percentage of that allocated time, students are engaged in planned learning activities directly related to identified objectives."

A wide variety of activities was implemented in the ACCS cluster to address the issues of instruction and achievement. A major part of this focus on achievement and high expectations was the itinerant teacher program. Changes in school policies such as homework and time-on-task were also a direct result of the ACCS project. Incentives for student academic achievement such as assemblies, published honor rolls, student-of-the-week, etc. were developed in conjunction with the ACCS project and students were encouraged to participate in many existing competitions. Many schools used inservice for teachers to address achievement-related issues, including mastery learning, high expectations, and diagnostic use of standardized tests. Finally, communication with parents about achievement and high expectations was increased through the use of parent meetings and newsletters.

Emphasis on Achievement/Clear School Mission

Itinerant Teacher Program

A major activity of the ACCS program which focused on achievement and high expectations was the itinerant teacher program. The ACCS project employed between two and four teachers (the number varied due to some turnover in staff) during the school year. These teachers worked for several weeks at a time at an ACC school site focusing on specific areas, such as literacy. Itinerant teachers modeled new teaching approaches and strategies as well as provided resources and support for classroom teachers. The itinerant teachers took a process-oriented approach to teaching and emphasized activities in which the learning of skills was integrated. For example, reading and writing skills such as capitalization, punctuation, vocabulary, and expression might be taught through creative writing, rather than through isolated exercises. Teachers and principals at all schools praised the itinerant teacher program and said it had positively affected instruction at their school. However teachers at Group 1 and Group 2 schools reported a difference in whether they continued the process-oriented activities after the itinerant teachers left.

Staff at Group 1 Schools reported that "the itinerant teachers were great, but after they left we haven't had time to do these kinds of (process-oriented) activities." They expressed the idea that Group 1 schools needed to be able to make learning fun and exciting for children but felt this was hindered by the immediate task-and-goal orientation imposed by the strong pressure to raise scores on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills. A number of teachers at Group 1 schools suggested that weaker students are most in need of process approaches but least likely to get them due to test score pressures. Ironically, the pressure to improve test scores may have the opposite of its intended effect, ultimately widening the gap between students from Group 1 and Group 2 schools.

In contrast, some staff at Group 2 schools mentioned that they had changed some of their instruction to do more process activities and more "committee" learning. Notably, the Group 2 schools do not feel much pressure to raise test scores and therefore feel freer to spend time on process-oriented activities such as creative writing, as opposed to product-oriented activities, such as worksheets, on suffixes and prefixes, dictionary skills, etc.

The apparent difference in using the activities of the itinerant teachers tends to make teachers from Group 2 schools look like better teachers - more adaptable, more open to new ideas, more energetic. But such an interpretation may oversimplify the situation. The context of Group 2 schools tends to support such change. Teachers at these schools do not feel the immediate pressure to raise test scores, and their classrooms are filled with children who are mostly coping well with school and life, students who readily orient to activities such as writing stories and poems. In contrast, teachers from Group 1 schools have many children who are not coping well with school or life, who may bring to the classroom more frustration with reading and writing, than knowledge or love of it. Such teachers report that they feel great pressure to promote students' test performance. Given the past twenty years of stress on behavioral objectives,

it is not surprising that spending a lot of classroom time on process-oriented activities would seem a risky approach to improving measurable subskills on a standardized test. Several groups of people interviewed said teachers do not feel free to try new approaches, when careers and salaries are tied to test scores.

Student Incentives and Recognition

Many of the schools in the cluster have focused on academic incentives by publishing an honor roll, displaying students' work and using other recognition strategies. However, such activities seem to have a more prominent function in Group 1 schools suggested by the fact that they were mentioned repeatedly by that group, but not the other. In interviews with teachers, principals and students at Group 1 schools, incentive programs were brought up as strengths of the school or activities which had made a difference in students' performance. In similar interviews at Group 2 schools, incentive programs were not mentioned by teachers, although such activities have been initiated during the ACCS project. A possible explanation is that the "level of motivation" of academic achievement which Group 2 students bring to schools is not perceived as problematic by teachers. Students interviewed at the Washington Middle School Student Council, but not at the Jefferson Student Council, mentioned recognition programs as a strength of the school. Although the Jefferson students didn't mention recognition programs during the interview, in the student needs assessment 17% more students in 1985 than in 1983, from both Washington and Jefferson agreed that the school recognizes their individual achievements or efforts. Interestingly, survey results from Albuquerque High School (AHS) show no change in students' perceptions of recognition for achievement. However, when the AHS student council was interveiwed, using an open-ended brainstorming-type format in small groups, several groups independently mentioned recognition programs as a strength of the school.

The somewhat contradictory finding between interview and survey results points out an important evaluation concern in this project. One of the risks of interviewing is that, in the absence of statistical sampling procedures, findings may not be representative. On the other hand, a risk in using questionnaires is that questions may not actually represent the areas in which you're interested. In addition, when aggregating data for many individuals, distinctions may be lost. Either of these factors may account for the failure of the survey at the high school level to elucidate change regarding the recognition program. Thus, interviewing may overrepresent some aspects of a situation, while surveying may underrepresent some aspects. Interview data, when findings are recurrent across individuals and schools, will be used to guide the evaluation, while data from survey instruments will be used to supplement and confirm insights from interviews.

In addition to recognition programs, many schools have begun to create special academically-oriented activities or to give added emphasis to others which already exist. For example, schools have attempted to encourage more students to participate in school, district or regional math competitions, spelling bees and science fairs, and have organized events such as Olympics of the Mind.

Development of Homework Policy

Schools at all levels have also responded to the emphasis on achievement and high expectations by instituting homework policies. The policies specify amount and frequency of homework to be assigned, as well as nature and promptness of teacher's response to the homework. In comparing survey results from spring, 1983 and spring, 1985, elementary students were found to agree more with the statement "I get homework almost every night." Almost 10% more of the students at Group 1 schools, and almost 20% more at Group 2 schools agreed with this statement, than two years earlier. Interestingly, more students at both the elementary and middle school levels now perceive their homework to be "too easy," as compared with students of two years ago. This trend is especially striking at the middle schools where agreement increased 30%. It is important, however, to realize that such a finding is not interpretable in a "straightforward" way; that is, this finding does not necessarily mean that homework has gotten easier in the past three years. It is more likely that schools have gradually increased homework requirements, and that students have adjusted their expectations in various ways, leading to the result that the students surveyed in 1985 perceived the question in a significantly different way than the students surveyed in 1983. This is a second difficulty in using survey data to assess the effects of a program - that is, in a changing context, the same question is understood differently at various points in time. Another reason interview data is emphasized in this evaluation report is because in an interview situation answers can be fully explained and therefore are more easily interpreted.

Teacher Inservice

Principals and some area administrators reported that the inservice days at the beginning of the school year are a very valuable part of the ACCS project. They feel these days give teachers the much needed time to focus on planning for the whole year and that the opportunity to meet together has contributed to a school-wide focus on teaching and learning, as well as developed better staff relationships. A seminar approach to continuous learning by teachers has also been praised by several administrators.

Achievement Gains

Student achievement can be evaluated in many ways. The Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) currently uses a wide variety of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests to measure student achievement. In addition, many less formal though equally important techniques are used to assess the achievement of students, such as student writing samples, anecdotal records, and teacher-made tests.

One way to look at project impact is to use a standardized, norm-referenced test such as the CTBS. There are several limitations to this approach, however. First, test scores for all students are affected by many factors such as attendance, mobility, home language, socioeconomic status, test taking skills, preparation, motivation, self-confidence, and testing environment. Second, a norm-referenced test may not match the curriculum or the focus of a program such as the ACCS project. Third, no test is administered at every grade level at all schools in APS, so matched longitudinal comparisons, the most valid way to look at student achievement over time, are not possible.

Although CTBS scores are an important indication of student achievement, they are just one way to measure achievement and provide only a snapshot of performance on a specific set of skills at a given point in time. According to the school effectiveness literature, a variety of instruments should be used to assess student achievement.

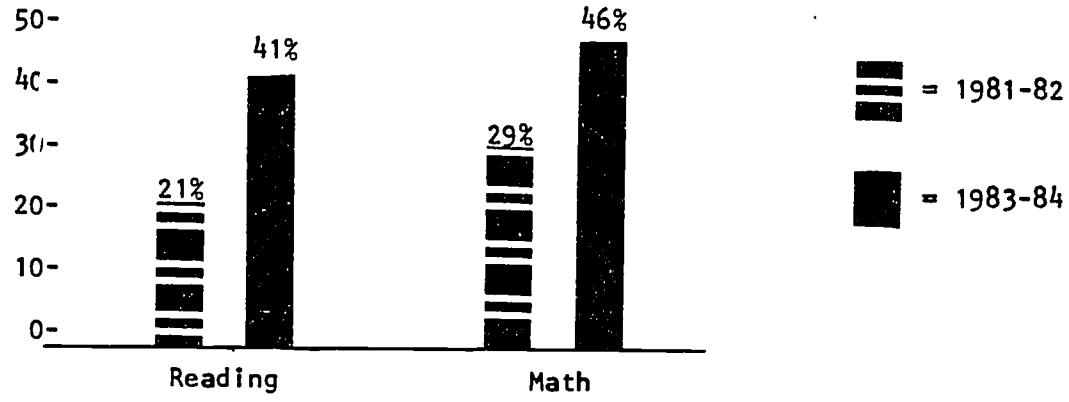
Since other sources of information on student achievement are not readily available, several ways of looking at student achievement using CTBS scores were explored. One method considered was a year-to-year comparison of test scores. Since the CTBS is administered at the third, fifth, and eighth grades only, any yearly comparison involves different groups of students. An increase or decrease in test scores between one year and the next may reflect either differences in the skills of that particular group of students or change in the school's program. Test results are more reliable when scores are compared over several years. For example, gradual increase over five years probably reflects differences in the school's program, rather than differences among students, though this variation still is not completely accounted for. Since yearly comparisons of test scores are already available to school staffs and others, it was decided not to duplicate that information in this report.

The most reliable way of using achievement test scores to look at program impact is to analyze results longitudinally, comparing each student's results from one year to the next. So the second method considered was to look at CTBS scores using whatever longitudinal information is available. Although the ideal is to compare matched scores over several years, this information is not currently available in APS. In Chapter I schools, however, students are tested in every grade level and matched comparisons are possible on a year-to-year basis. It was decided that scores from 1981-82, prior to the implementation of the project, and scores from 1983-84, the most recent test scores available, would be used for the analysis. Six of the nine ACCS elementary schools, have Chapter I programs. At these six schools comparisons can be made at four grade levels for a total of 24 comparison groups. In other words, the scores of first graders in 1981 were compared to their second grade scores in 1982; the scores of second graders in 1981 were compared to their scores as third graders in 1982, etc.

Between the spring, 1981 and spring, 1982 testing, 21% of the matched groups of students made gains in reading and 29% made gains in math. During the same period, 75% declined, and 4% remained the same in reading while 63% declined and 8% remained the same in math. By comparison, test scores for the 1983-84 period showed more improvement. In reading 41% of the groups increased, 54% decreased, and 4% remained the same. In math, 46% increased and 54% decreased. Thus, during the first full year of the ACCS project, 20% more groups of matched students increased their percentile ranking in reading than prior to ACCS implementation, while 17% more increased their percentile ranking in math. Table 9 compares the increases in reading and math for the two periods 1981-82 and 1983-84.

Table 9

Percentage of Matched Student Groups Making Gains in Percentile Ranking on CTBS



It should be noted that achievement tests measure a student's progress relative to his or her peers nation-wide. If a student scores at the same percentile two years in a row, it means that he or she has progressed as rapidly as others in the same age group. If a student's percentile rank goes up, it means that he or she has progressed more rapidly than normal for that age group. Therefore, an increase is extremely difficult because it means that the student must learn more or learn faster than other students during the school year.

While the improvement in test scores is encouraging it cannot be concluded that these improvements are entirely attributable to ACCS activities. Educational settings are extremely complex and Chapter I schools, in particular, have many and varied support programs operating simultaneously. However, what is important is that students are showing progress as measured by standardized tests.

Use of Assessment Instruments

Analysis of Test Scores

For some of the Group 1 schools, a focus on achievement and the development of a clear school mission has been influenced by the use of assessment instruments. Performance on the various CTBS subtests have been analyzed and textbook selections have been made on the basis of weak areas. In addition, in-services have been conducted on diagnostic uses of test results. Some of the Group 1 school staff, however, have complained that they are pressured to raise CTBS scores and that this stress has a negative impact on curriculum in the short-term and on achievement in the long-term.

Specificially, staff from seven of the nine elementary schools have argued that emphasis on subtests and subskills leads to a lot of time engaged in fragmented "worksheet and drill" activities, and that while such classroom activity may improve test scores in an immediate way, it will not promote the kind of important growth in literacy or reasoning that students need for long-term academic success. One administrator pointed out that in some of the project schools, many of the children "come to the school three years behind, but they are all given the same tests." Teachers at both Group 1 and Group 2 schools asserted the need for alternative forms of assessment and for exemption from CTBS for students whose proficiency in English is below a certain level. Not all those interviewed agreed with this notion. One person expressed the belief that teachers who want alternatives to CTBS are revealing "low expectations" and that such expectations are, in fact, responsible for their students' low test scores.

Relationship Between Achievement and Other Variables

If the nine elementary schools which comprise the AHS cluster are ranked on the basis of their CTBS scores, they may appear to describe a continuum; because any set of scores can be ranked and will superficially appear continuous. A test score distribution creates the impression of continuous variation but by focusing on outcome data such as test scores, one fails to take into account several important factors. One ignored factor is that children bring different knowledge, experiences and skills with them to school - a factor which significantly affects test scores. For example, school profile data show that CTBS scores correlate .77 with the educational levels of adults from their respective communities. This is a high correlation and means that over half of the statistical variation in test performance between schools can be accounted for by the educational level of the adults with whom children live. But such correlations are not causes, nor do they set limits on the possible levels of achievement of children. Home factors do, however, make demands on teachers and on the curriculum of schools. Many of these factors are discussed in greater detail in the following section on high expectations.

High Expectations

School and Community Expectations

Many of the ACCS addressed the area of high expectations by conducting in-service workshops addressing achievement-related issues. Those interviewed felt the workshops had been quite valuable. In particular, sessions on "mastery learning" and the "social factors associated with student performance" were mentioned as giving valuable insights into the matter of maintaining high expectations. Some of the principals felt that the project's emphasis on achievement and high expectations was very beneficial because it had challenged complacency and caused school personnel and community members, alike, to raise their expectations of students, especially those in Group 1 schools. Some of the Group 1 schools even addressed the area of parental expectations by holding parent meetings and sending newsletters to parents discussing the importance of having high expectations for children. In contrast, none of the Group 2 schools identified parents' expectations as a concern and did not address this issue.

Home Factors

Those interviewed at Group 1 schools frequently expressed the notion that people who have not worked in this type of school oversimplify the notion of high expectations because they fail to grasp the daily reality which must be struggled with in such schools. Those interviewed at about half of the schools referred to children who come to school unfed, abused, or sick; children who stay home to care for younger children so that a parent can work, or to care for a mother who has been abused; children who live in homes where there is no plumbing, no refrigeration, no electricity; children from homes where noone knows how to read or use checking accounts, or what to do if a child is sick; and children who are moved between several family units, or from one home to another once or more during the year. Teachers and principals in such schools often find that much of their time has to be spent in social-worker type activities rather than teaching because learning cannot occur until crises are resolved. One teacher said, "a child who is obsessed with fear for his mother's safety cannot pay attention to classwork until the family has found secure shelter. If I can help, I do." School principals referred to non-instructional activities which demand their time. One said, "Sometimes I seem more like a taxi driver than an educator." Several teachers mentioned the difficulty of maintaining a focus on instruction when children's lives are in crisis. They felt that for a child whose life is in turmoil, learning is impossible and the issue of high expectations is irrelevant when viewed from this perspective.

Mobility Rates

In line with the concern about children's problems, teachers at Group 1 schools also emphasized the problem of "mobility rate," the frequency with which students enter and leave a school. When new children enter after the beginning of the school year, the teacher must attempt to assess the children's needs, coordinate their placement in special programs if appropriate, help them integrate socially as well as academically, into the class, and meet a variety of other needs. For children who are functioning at grade level, mid-year entry is a difficult transition, but for children who require academic assistance it is

especially problematic. Although the "stability rates" presented in the school profile data show that there is very little variation in rate across the schools in the ACCS cluster, this issue was raised by many teachers at Group 1 schools, but by none at Group 2 schools.

At least two factors appear to account for this difference. One is that the statistics, as currently reported, do not reflect the fact that often a child moves in and out of a school several times during a year, reflecting movement between several households of a larger family. This kind of mobility is more frequent in Group 1 schools, than in Group 2 schools, where the child who leaves usually does not return to the same school. The second factor is that students who move into a Group 1 classroom after the beginning of the year are more likely to have special academic needs, and therefore require more work on the teacher's part to be integrated into existing programs. At one Group 1 school, the staff interviewed agreed that the extent of "mobility" in their school warranted a full-time person to coordinate the integration of entering students and to facilitate the transfer of those who are leaving. In addition, elementary teachers at several schools emphasized the importance of children's prior knowledge on their school performance. They expressed concern about the extreme differences in the entry levels of their students. One first grade teacher said, "I think I have high expectations for all the kids, but some know so much more than others when they get here. There's such a range, I don't think they should all be in the same class. It's hard on all of them."

Stressful Working Conditions

Not surprisingly, teachers and principals at Group 1 schools tend to find their jobs very stressful and often become caught up in the plight of the children in their schools. Many see a variety of district policies and procedures as damaging. For example, the pressure to raise test scores is seen as trying to purchase a risky short-term benefit be at a long-term cost, and the publishing of test scores is seen as stigmatizing. Many teachers at Group 1 schools, as well as some at Group 2 schools, perceive favoritism for Group 2 schools. They expressed the belief that schools in neighborhoods having more political power get more and better instructional materials and facilities, which both directly and indirectly affects achievement. For example, if students had math manipulatives they would be more likely to learn math, while if they had nicer classroom environments they might find schooling more attractive, which could indirectly affect achievement. Teachers at half the schools expressed some cynicism about how decisions have been made to build new schools in the cluster. Also, teachers feel that administrators at less crisis-ridden schools have more time to engage in activities that support teaching, and many teachers expressed the opinion that this is "just one more way that the rich get richer." The teachers at all Group 1 schools expressed more frustration with various administrative processes. Many people at Group 1 schools feel caught in a kind of downward spiral, but find the affection of the children a saving factor. One person summarized the feeling with the statement, "If it weren't for the relationship you develop with the kids here, and the way the staff works together, nobody would put up with it."

Working at Group 1 schools is understandably very difficult and almost all of the ACCS principals and several other administrators felt a standard rotation

policy of 5 to 7 years should be mandatory in these schools for principals as well as teachers. Those in favor felt that rotating staff would alleviate burn-out and would maximize the amount of energy and new ideas available to these schools. Teachers were not as favorable to the suggested rotation policy because they felt it took several years to get to know the students and their families. However, everyone agreed that just rotating people into and out of these schools would not necessarily create a desirable situation. The people selected to work at these schools should be very skilled, creative people who have a high tolerance for stress.

In spite of all these difficulties, the Albuquerque City Center Schools staff maintain high expectations for their students. No differences emerge on the student survey data between schools or levels (elementary, middle or high school) with regard to teacher expectations. Children at the elementary schools expressed about 97% agreement that "my teacher wants me to work hard" and "my teacher expects me to do well in school." At the middle school level, 90% of the students reported that "my teachers want me to work hard" and 88% said that "my teachers expect me to do well in school." At the high school level 74% of the students agreed that their teachers "have high expectations for student achievement."

Time-On-Task

An emphasis on time-on-task is the fourth characteristic associated with instruction and achievement in effective schools. In all of the schools time-on-task considerations have been addressed through restricting the use of the public address system and by coordinating the "pullout schedule", i.e., the times that children are pulled out of the regular classroom for special instructional experiences.

Approaches to Supplemental Programs

Many teachers feel that the idea of having a lot of support programs is good for children in theory, but that, in practice, it fragments the children's daily experience. Several regular classroom teachers commented that "some of the students are out of my classroom more than they're here. The child has to deal with three, four, maybe five different teachers. The scheduling of when a child comes and goes in my classroom is insane." A number of teachers said they thought that the children would be better served if they stayed in the same classroom all day so that a child could really get to know one adult and could develop a real relationship. By staying in the classroom all day they believed the child could get "quality individualized" attention because the adult would know the "whole child." Classroom teachers agreed that not all teachers have the specialized training of the support teachers. However, they felt that support staff are limited because by seeing a child for 30 to 50 minutes a day in an ESL or a Chapter I context, they can't relate what they're trying to teach to anything else the child is learning. More importantly, since they focus on specific deficiencies they may not be familiar with, and therefore not able to utilize, the child's strengths in school.

Survey results show that instructional time is not interrupted as frequently as it was before the ACCS project was implemented. While in both January of 1985 and February of 1985 60% of the teachers agreed that instructional time was rarely interrupted, the range of agreement in individual schools shifted. In 1984 agreement ranged from 11% at one school to 95% at another school, while in 1985 the agreement ranged from 38% to 90%.

Modification of Student Behavior

Group 1 schools have addressed time-on-task by attempting to modify students' behavior through positive reinforcement and more explicit attention to immediate goals and objectives. The Group 1 schools historically have had more occurrence of disruptive behavior, which has led to the implementation of various incentive strategies to focus attention on academic productivity. The opportunity afforded by the project to purchase "incentives" and "rewards" was widely appreciated. Both teachers and principals commented that they are able to "spend more time on learning these days," that the climate for learning has been positively affected by the implementation of these strategies.

It is important to note that product-oriented activities (worksheets, drills) converg neatly with a time-on-task orientation and a focus on improving test scores. Many teachers remarked they dislike teaching specific skills, but find that it's difficult to implement "more process type activities, such as writing stories." Process activities probably require children to attend for longer periods of time in more self-directed activities. Smaller classroom groupings, mentioned so frequently by teachers in Group 1 schools might better facilitate such instruction in these schools.

School Environment

Overview of School Environment

As was stated previously, the seven school effectiveness characteristics are interrelated and could be grouped in a variety of ways. Especially the area of administrative leadership is related to all aspects of school improvement - instruction, climate, and relationships with the community. For the purpose of discussion, however, the two school effectiveness characteristics grouped under school environment deal with the safety and orderliness of the school and administrative leadership.

The definitions of these two characteristics are given below:

- Safe and Orderly Environment: "There is an orderly purposeful atmosphere which is free from the threat of physical harm. However, the atmosphere is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning."
- Administrative Leadership: "The principal acts as the instructional leader who effectively communicates the mission of the school to the staff, parents, and students, and who understands and applies the characterisitcs of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program of the school."

Many activities were implemented in the ACCS cluster to improve the school environment. Among these were changes in discipline policies, use of student incentives and "time-outs" to modify behavior, surveying students about safety issues, communicating with parents about school policies, scheduling of regular classroom visits by administrators and initiating inservice activities for school staff.

Safe and Orderly Environment

All of the ACCS schools report that they have modified and codified their discipline policy as part of the ACCS activities. Both incentive and aversive strategies are used. Students are rewarded for good behavior, with awards such as Student-of-the-Week or Month, and punished for bad behavior, by time-out or detention. At the secondary level there is staff monitoring of passing periods, a procedure singled out for praise by both students and staff in all middle and high school interviews. One school surveyed students on safety issues and implemented several new strategies based on the results.

Changes in Discipline Policies

At Group 2 schools staff reported that changes in the discipline policy were evident in student behavior on the playground during recesses and before and after school. However, at Group 1 schools the change in discipline also affected classrooms. Teachers and principals of these schools remarked that "now we can focus more on instruction," and that "the staff has been able to shift its priorities." Prior to the changes in discipline policy during the ACCS project, the problem of negative behavior appears to have been qualitatively different between Group 1 and Group 2 schools.

Staff from both kinds of schools report increased order and an improved quality of environment. Students at many schools also reported such improvements; however, only in interviews at Group 1 schools did students report that physical, as opposed to verbal, fighting continues to occur, though much less than previously. At about one-third of Group 1 schools, the incidence of fighting was formerly much more severe, and staff referred to times before the policy change when parents entered the school and encouraged their children to fight. To enlist parental support, Group 1 schools have attempted to directly involve parents in the process of updating their discipline policies. Letters explaining the policy were sent home for parents to sign and children were expected to return the letters. In addition, in cases of extreme misbehavior at the elementary level, parents are contacted to take the child out of school. The results is that a parent is always involved when a child is suspended. Since the policies have been instituted, principals and teachers in Group 2 schools report that the number of one to three day suspensions has declined markedly. In addition, the use of time-out areas or other variations on the time-out approach (such as moving a student to another teacher's room in response to negative behavior) has improved overall order in the schools, while in some Group 2 schools the need for a time-out space has actually been eliminated. Survey data from the elementary and middle schools indicates that children feel safer at school than two years earlier. Eleven percent more children at Group 1 elementaries, 6% more at Group 2 elementaries, and 26% more at both middle schools indicated that their "school is a safe place to be."

Time-Out Strategy

Teachers at all schools addressed the difficulty of implementing the time-out strategy. In order to have a time-out space, there must be a room available and an adult to oversee the room. Moreover, that adult should have some training or knowledge relevant to such responsibility, and there should be continuity of

responsibility over time. Unfortunately, funding has not been available to staff the time-out activity. Instead, teachers have taken on time-out duty during preparation periods, and students have been shuffled from place to place, with no continuity of supervision. Individual teachers have had to contact each other to keep up with the experiences of particular students. Some students at the secondary level have as many as five different teachers, and teachers may have several students at the same time involved in time-out. Several teachers have reported that they frequently spend more than two or three hours before and after shool conferencing with other teachers about students who have problems.

Teachers who have students with behavior problems discussed the "stress factor." One of the teacher's comments captures the concerns of many: "There's not enough hours in the day. After I've tried to deal with the problems that come up, and tracked down all the other teachers I need to talk to, the day's over. I mean lots of times we call each other at home to talk about the kids. But sometimes I have to sleep too, let alone prep(are) for the next day."

At schools with a higher incidence of behavior problems, more teachers expressed discontent about the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR). Many teachers had the expectation that the ACCS project would create a lower PTR in regular classrooms since that was a part of the originial proposal. However, due to the expense, this recommendation was not implemented. A consensus was expressed by teachers about the effect of PTR on children's behavior. Many teachers felt that children's behavior is often an effect rather than a cause of their academic performmance. That is, if a child is operating at a frustrational level academically, he or she is more like to misbehave. They believe that if the low achieving child can be given an improved academic experience his or her "all-around behavior" will also improve.

Administrative Leadership

School environments have changed in many ways which can be attributed to leadership. For example, principals have taken primary responsibility for such activities as instituting new policies, issuing handbooks for parents, and so forth. These are discussed at length in other sections of the report.

Inservice Activities

Principals often have been primary initiators of the inservice activities associated with ACCS. Such activity is not specifically a change brought by the project, but a number of principals noted that the ACCS project has been very productive because it has provided a structure and framework for change, and has promoted activities which have created improved staff interaction and a sense of community within each school. The opportunity for inservices before the school year begins and weekend retreats, both funded by the ACCS project, were considered particularly beneficial by principals and by some teachers.

Classroom Visitations

Several ACCS principals reported that they tried to improve their leadership in the school by increasing the number of classroom visitiations. At Group 2 schools, principals reported visiting more frequently than principals at Group 1 schools. At least one Group 2 elementary principal visits every classroom everyday. At Group 1 schools some principals commented that they do not have as much time as they'd like to visit classrooms. One principal summed up the comments of others, saying, "I should have more time to be visiting classrooms, but there's so many crises all the time that I can't do it very often." These principals said that the family crises they handle each day combined with the amount of paper work they process makes it very difficult to adhere to a classroom visitation schedule. Although they all expressed the desire to be in the classroom more often and to be an instructional leader in the true sense of the word, they felt they were forced to function more as a manager, problem solver, and social worker than an instructional leader.

Increased Paperwork

The increase in paperwork as a direct result of the ACCS project was noted by almost all of the principals. A few felt that the additional funds available to them from the project were not worth the amount of paperwork they had to complete to obtain them. Principals at Group 2 schools did not find the paperwork as much of a problem as Group 1 principals, but principals at some Group 1 schools said the additional ACCS-generated paperwork was almost overwhelming on top of the other kinds of problems they deal with everyday. Regardless of how problematic paperwork (ACCS or APS) was considered to be, all of the principals said they never passed paperwork along to teachers or other staff members, but completed it themselves after school hours, often arriving at school by 7:00 am and remaining at the school until 5:00 and 6:00 at night. Although they indicated that they didn't mind working extremely hard and giving extra time, they felt it was unfair to their own families, and worried about not being able to do their share at home. The time requirements were especially a problem for principals with young children.

School Climate

Administrators appear to have become more involved in a positive way with students during the past two years. Twenty percent more elementary students this spring than the spring of 1983, feel they are "treated nicely" by the principal, and over ten percent more said that "the principal cares for me." At the middle schools, fifteen percent more students than two years ago are "satisfied by the way I am treated by the principal and assistant principal." In addition, attitudes toward support personnel, specifically counselors and librarians, have also become more positive among elementary and mid school students, with 10 to 25% increases is an indication of the "helpfulness" of these people.

Communication With Parents

In most schools, administrative leadership has been a key factor in the improvement of home-school relations. In response to the ACCS project schools have increased the number of contacts made with parents. At Group 2 schools, principals report sending home weekly newsletters, while at Group 1 schools, generally monthly newsletters are sent. This aspect of administrative leadership will be discussed more fully in the next section of the report, School-Community Relations.

School-Community Relations

Overview of School-Community Relations

The school effectiveness characteristic to be discussed in this section focuses on the relationships between the school and the home. The Connecticut State Department of Education (1981) definition of this characteristic follows:

- Home-School Relations: "Parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are made to feel that they have an important role in achieving this mission."

However, the ACCS project expanded the focus of this characteristic to include the larger community, such as businesses and the university. Therefore, this characteristic will be referred to as School-Community Relations. Some of the activities in this area of focus included increased communication with parents and other community members through newsletters, meetings, and home visits; and encouragement of parent and community involvement in the school through parent volunteer programs, parent organizations, representation on project task forces and committees, and adopt-a-school programs.

School-Community Relations

Communication and Understanding

Some of the activities which are attributed to the goal of improving the school's relations with parents and community have been discussed in other areas. However, these activities also are related to school-community relations and will be briefly mentioned here. Many activities directed at parents and community have been designed to increase communication and mutual understanding. There has been dissemination at both elementary and secondary levels of handbooks to better inform parents about the workings of the school. In addition, parents have been informed about policy changes and their support has been explicitly solicited, through both letters and meetings. Schools have also tried to develop strategies and procedures for working more closely with parents when a child is having academic or behavioral problems. Some of the schools have standardized parent contact procedures and have adopted a policy of making contact by telephone whenever possible.

ACC schools have attempted to become allies of parents to work together for improved behavior and achievement. At the elementary level, there have been workshops for parents on ways to help children with homework and also ways to go "Beyond Homework." A Family-Read-Aloud program also was implemented in at least one school to encourage parents to read with their children. Letters of recognition and appreciation have been sent to parents when children do well in school. At the secondary level, workshops have been held to help parents cope with the problems of drug abuse or behavioral conflicts with teenagers.

Parent and Community Involvement

Both parents and community have been encouraged to become involved in the schools. Some schools have developed parent volunteer programs in which interested parents participate in classroom activities. Community groups such as businesses and service organizations have been involved in field trips for students, in bringing special events into the "adopted" school, and in the school's recognition programs.

Additional efforts have been made to involve parents in the activities of Parent Advisory Councils (PAC), in Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO), or Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). Teachers and principals at Group 2 schools were generally much more optimistic about parental involvement in the school than were staff at Group 1 schools, although even staff at the Group 2 schools said that parent involvement is often the same, small group of parents all the time. One teacher at a Group 2 school who had previously taught at a Group 1-type school commented that Group 2 schools "are lucky because their students' parents have more time to give to the schools," such as for a PTA-sponsored playground improvement program.

Staff at Group 1 schools reported that efforts at involving parents in meetings of various parent organizations were largely unsuccessful. Some felt that parents who are struggling to survive don't have the inclination, the time, or even the transportation to become involved in evening meetings or activities. In addition, meetings which are predominantly conducted in English and typically utilize parliamentary procedure are not comfortable or meaningful for many

parents. Teachers and principals at Group 1 schools were generally sympathetic toward parents, defending them against the sterotype of "parents who don't care about their kids' education." One teacher seemed to sum up the comments of others when she said, "I grew up here, so I know what it's like. It's not that the parents don't care about school. It's that they have to spend all their time just getting by. Many of them don't like to come to school because their own experience in school was so bad. Even if they want to help their kids, they probably don't know what to do. And then there's the ones who can't read the notes we send home, even if (the notes) are bilingual."

The principal at one school who is particularly successful at involving parents expressed a clear-cut philosophy about parental involvement. The principal said the school should not exist for the community, but be a part of the community. To this end parental involvement is nurtured through: 1) the belief that parents are the child's primary teacher and should be involved daily with their child in structured educational activities provided by the school 2) the expectation that all parents will be involved in the school in one form or another 3) conducting bilingual (Spanish/English) parent meetings 4) frequent contact with the home by newsletter, phone, and home visits and 5) frequent use of the building by individuals and parent/community groups. A parent's willingness to be involved in school activities as reported by the principal was summarized in this way. "I don't know what the meeting's for, but here I am because someone invited me."

Home Visits

Home visits by teachers were used by three of the Group 1 schools to improve relations with the families. Teachers who participated in the home visit program were extremely enthusiastic. Principals also were impressed by the experience. Several teachers felt that home visits created the possibility for much better relations between teacher and parent, and said they would like to be able to visit the home of every child in their class before each school year begins. One teacher commented, "We really talked in the home, and then some parents came to parent conferences at school who I'm sure would have never come otherwise." Only teachers from Group 1 schools mentioned home visits, which is not surprising since teachers at Group 2 schools do not generally see parental involvement as a problem. Many of the teachers who had made home visits suggested that one of the best uses for ACCS funds would be to hire teachers a few days early to make home visits before school starts in the fall.

Several of the original Core Area Committee (CAC) members who were interviewed mentioned that the critical issue in parental participation seems to be the level of trust between the school and the community. They said that, based on personal experiences from their own childhood, many parents feel a generalized distrust of the schools. Personal contact with individual teachers on the parent's own "territory" can begin to create trust of the school, which people from all groups interviewed felt is crucial for children's success.

Interviews with CAC members indicate that the project has been successful in involving community members on task forces and committees. There was substantial consensus regarding the purpose and accomplishments of the original Core Area Committee. However, many CAC members expressed pessimism about the consequences of their involvement, and disappointment or disillusionment with APS. Those who were more disillusioned are those who remain more involved with project schools rather than those who have become more distant from the project. Results from these interviews suggest that when community members are involved in APS projects,

the district needs to give particular attention to clarifying the role of community recommendations and react to these recommendations with a reasonable time frame. Because CAC members had not been debriefed since they made their recommendations in November of 1982, they did not believe APS had really acted on the recommendations. The individuals were disappointed and resentful because they had donated countless hours of time and said they would not be as likely to volunteer in the future. CAC members were quite receptive to being interviewed and some saw it as the first time they had been approached by APS since the last CAC meeting two years before. Overall, the project might have benefited by seeking to discover and address community sources of dissatisfaction through periodically consulting all CAC members.

Core Area Committee Recommendations

In comparison to the typical relationship between schools and communities in the past, several CAC members envision an expansion of this relationship. In the words of one committee member, "We should work together to assure that the schools become major community resources for residents of all ages." They suggested that schools should be open longer hours and to a broader population. For example, one suggestion was that school libraries and computer labs should function like public library facilities. CAC members also specifically recommended the following as ways to "capture" community support: 1) making provisions for the participation of working parents, such as flexible scheduling of parent conferences, possibly outside normal school hours 2) providing Home Start programs (a Chapter 1 funded activity in which aides provide in the students' home instruction and materials for cooperative parent-child activities 3) sponsoring community social events 4) offering extended day services and 5) sending home newsletters and continuing to insert APS in Action in the city newspaper.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Project Impact

The Albuquerque City Center Schools project during the last year and a half seemed to have an impact on the twelve schools in several areas.

First, the project facilitated change by providing a structure and framework for school improvement activities. Although the structure was somewhat loose and was interpreted differently in various school sites, most schools concentrated on aspects of the ACCS goals that met their individual needs.

Second, the project increased the achivement orientation of the schools. It appeared to have challenged complacency, raised expectations for student and staff performance, improved the approach to literacy in the schools through the itinerant teacher program, and caused educators to think about instruction and learning. It also apparently increased anxiety about performance of students on standardized tests and as a result affected teachers' willingness to try new teaching strategies.

Third, the project strengthened school-community relationships through home visits, increased communication with parents, greater representation of parents and community members on task forces and committees, and increased involvement of the community in school activities.

Fourth, the project positively affected discipline in the ACCS resulting in less fighting and a more orderly school environment. There is also evidence at some school sites, that staff relationships became more congenial and that student-administrator interactions became more positive than before the project was implemented.

Fifth, an unintended project affect is that many teachers and principals are experiencing greater stress and symptoms of burn-out. Part of this appears to be due to the intense focus on student test performance and part due to the augmentation in paperwork.

Finally, the ACCS project has resulted in many subtle shifts in perception and attitude and in the institutionalization of a variety of strategies, approaches, and procedures. This was apparent throughout the evaluation process because staff members at individual schools often could no longer distinguish between ACCS activities and regular activities at their schools. Although this made the evaluation more difficult, it is evidence of the successful integration of some of the project's goals.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to improve the Albuquerque City Center Schools project for the 1985-86 school year.

1. The focus of the program should be narrowed. This could be accomplished by concentrating project resources in only Group 1 schools, by focusing on specific instructional areas only (e.g., literacy) or by making both of these changes. Many of the original project goals, such as improving discipline, raising expectations, and assessing staff, student, and

parent perceptions of the schools have been accomplished and no longer need to be addressed through specific activities.

2. When the project focus is determined all resources should be used to support this focus. For example, if the area of literacy is selected as a project focus, the itinerant teacher program; inservice or seminar groups for teachers and administrators; parental involvement, and resources and materials purchased by the project should all focus on literacy. The project can have a greater impact if resources are concentrated in one or two specific areas.

3. Successful approaches that should be continued or expanded to address the project's focus are: the use of itinerant teachers, home visits, seminar study groups for continued professional development, and student and staff incentives.

4. Ways to creatively utilize staff and funding from supplemental programs should be explored. For example, schools might experiment with alternative classroom arrangements in which supplemental and regular classroom teachers work in teams with groups of students. Similar to the family plan in operation at one middle school, this approach might result in integrated instruction and lower P.R's, without requiring additional funding.

5. The issue of student test performance should be placed in proper perspective so that teachers and principals feel free to try approaches and strategies that will result in long-term academic benefits for students. The problem is not the test themselves, but the uses to which they are put. The climate needs to be such that process and skill building-type activities (e.g., creative writing) and the development of skills on standardized tests are not seen as mutually exclusive.

6. The evaluation design should reflect the narrowed project focus and should creatively address the issue of student achievement through the use of a variety of instruments.